



## Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).

just and appropriate ; they are marked by a loving appreciation of merit and graceful expression, that show her fitness for the pleasing task she has undertaken. Mr. Griswold's book is larger, containing not only more names, but a more copious selection from the writings of each poet. Some of the notices evince considerable scholarship and literary dexterity. Mr. Read has not entered into biographical details, but contented himself with brief critical remarks in introducing each poet. His taste is shown not only as a critic; but as an artist, in the engraved portraits of a number of the lady writers from paintings by his own hand.

---

ART. VIII. — *Significance of the Alphabet.* By CHARLES KRAITSIR, M. D. Boston : E. P. Peabody. 1846.

“It is impossible,” says Volney, “in passing in review the different alphabets of Europe, to see without surprise, that nations proud of their progress in the sciences and arts have remained so far behind in the most elementary science of all, the science indeed which serves as the base of this vast, complicated edifice of civilization. The alphabetic methods of our Europe are true caricatures.\* Irregularities, incoherences, deficiencies, redundancies appear in the Spanish and Italian alphabets, in the German, the Polish, and the Dutch ; as for those of the French and English, they are disorder itself.”

The English alphabet is the most confused and disordered of all. Yet no modern tongue began its career as a written language under better auspices than the Anglo-Saxon. The Roman alphabet was adapted to this language with excellent judgment. The characters of this alphabet were employed to denote the sounds which the two languages had in common ; while, to represent those which were wanting in the Latin, characters were invented or were borrowed from other alphabets. The disorder which prevails in the notation of

---

\* An exception should here be made in favor of the Russian and some other of the Slavonic alphabets. The author refers to those nations using the Roman alphabet.

our language is not to be attributed to our Anglo-Saxon ancestors. It is to be ascribed chiefly to the Norman ascendancy in England, and to the influence which the superior civilization of the French gave them over the higher classes in that country, who not only imitated their more refined neighbors in matters in which they were worthy to give example, but, — led by that blind devotion to a vague idea of fashion, which, it must be confessed, is the weakness of the English, and, by inheritance, our own, — followed them in their errors with equal zeal. Nowhere are the effects of this idle subserviency more evident, or more injurious, than in the disorder which it has introduced into the notation of our language. Our alphabet, indeed, as at present pronounced,\* would appear to be framed for the service only of that inconsiderable portion of our language which is derived from the corrupted Latin; and we have in a manner, shut ourselves out from all chance of detecting and reforming our errors, by adopting, in our pronunciation of Latin, all the Frankish corruptions, and by even adding to these the numerous irregularities and caprices which, — the standard of reason being once abandoned, — have continually introduced themselves unchecked into the English language. We have already spoken, in a former article, of the defective and disordered state of the English alphabet, and of the increased difficulty which we experience in the study of other languages, and in the pursuit of the science of language itself, from the false and imperfect manner in which the groundwork of our education is laid.

To introduce at once a radical reform into the writing of the English language is a task hardly possible of accomplishment; and, even if it were possible, we believe that it is very little desirable that such a reform should be attempted at the present time, when the very low state of philological science

---

\* We refer here more particularly to the mispronunciation of the letters which, with the Romans, represented the gutturals, and which still represent them with us, in all pure English words, as in *can, get, &c.* We now attribute to *c* in our alphabet the sound of *s*, though its name in the Roman alphabet was that which we give to the *k* in ours. This was also the sound which it denoted in all Anglo-Saxon, as well as in all Latin words. We give to the *g*, whose proper sound in English, as well as in Latin, is that which it has in *get, give, &c.*, the sound which is also denoted in our alphabet by the character *j*, a sound unknown to the Anglo-Saxon, and also to the pure Latin, though it is supposed to have existed in some of the rustic dialects.

among us leaves little room to hope that such a plan would be judiciously executed. Amendments in the spelling or pronunciation of a living language can only take place very gradually, and are to be brought about only by such a general diffusion of knowledge, as shall bring the people whose property the language is to a sense of the necessity of them. A great deal may be done to this end by the introduction of a very simple reform recommended by Dr. Kraitsir. He proposes that in teaching the alphabet, the letters shall be called by the names given to them in the Roman and in the Anglo-Saxon alphabet, and which express the sounds which these letters invariably represented in those languages.\* By this means the correct pronunciation would be the rule, and the deviations from it would be known as the exceptions. Another advantage arising from this reform would be, that it would draw attention to the derivation of our words; the very defects of our alphabet would, in this way, become instructive; the discrepancy between the character and the sound would suggest the history of the mispronounced word, and even the common reader would readily trace the affinities between our Latin-derived words, and the older and more original part of our language, from which they now appear almost wholly disconnected.

Dr. Kraitsir proposes another measure of reform, yet more easy of introduction, since its adoption depends upon the more educated classes. This is the restoration of the correct pronunciation of Latin in our schools. The Latin is a language of the utmost importance to the student of philology. Forming, as it does, the groundwork of an important class of the languages of modern Europe, and being, at the same time, intimately allied with the Teutonic and the Celtic, it forms the connecting link between these several classes; and as these have each contributed to the formation of our language, a correct knowledge of the Latin is peculiarly impor-

---

\* The proportion which the Teutonic part of the English language bears to that which is taken from the Latin, and the modern languages derived from it, is somewhat more than that of three to one. When, from the foreign portion of our language, we deduct those words in which the root letters remain uncorrupted, — the gutturals retaining, even in Latin and French-derived words, their original power before three of the vowels, and before the liquids *l* and *r* — it will be apparent, that it is only to a very small portion of our language that our alphabet, as at present pronounced, is applicable.

tant to the English student. But, by forcing upon the Latin the corruptions which have found place in the languages derived from it, we destroy its utility in this respect, while at the same time, we rob it of all that its antiquity should give it of venerable and dignified.

The restoration of the correct pronunciation of the Latin would also be found of great advantage in giving a knowledge of the true nature and purpose of an alphabet.

The learning to spell and pronounce any one language correctly would, indeed, have a great effect in clearing from our minds that perplexity in regard to all matters connected with the study of language, which, involving them, as it does, from earliest infancy, is a fatal hinderance to our progress, clogging every step with doubt and insecurity. The ancient languages offer greater advantages, in this view, than any modern tongues that come within the ordinary compass of our study; inasmuch as the notation of sounds in them is regular and consistent, the same character never being employed to represent articulations belonging to different classes. For, with the ancients, the office of letters was truly — as Quintilian expresses it — to preserve sounds, and render them up to the reader, as a pledge entrusted to their care. But we lose entirely the benefit we might derive, in this respect, from the study of the ancient languages, and more especially of the Latin, by carrying into our pronunciation of that language all the errors and inconsistencies that perplex our own. We introduce the same confusion among the vowel sounds.\* The character which, in one position, represents the short sound of one vowel, in another position, denotes the long sound of quite another.† We pronounce diphthongs as simple vowels, simple vowels as diphthongs.‡ *C* and *g*, when they come before *e* and *i*, no longer stand for gutturals; the proper sound

---

\* In the Roman alphabet, the *a* has the sound which we give it in *ah*; the *e* as the *a* in *came*; the *i* as we pronounce *e* in *be*. The diphthongal sound which is given to *i* in the English alphabet was denoted in Latin by *ae*, and, more anciently, by *ai*, as in the Greek.

† Thus in *pava*, we give to the *a*, in the first syllable, the long sound of *e*; in the second its own short sound. In *decem*, the first *e* is pronounced as *i*; the second has its proper short sound.

‡ The *i* of *dico* is pronounced *ai*; the *ae* of *caedo*, *i*. In *primaevus*, the diphthong and the simple vowel are made to change places. The simple vowel *i* in the first syllable becoming a diphthong; the diphthong *ae*, in the second syllable, taking the sound of *i*.

of *c* is displaced by a sibilant; that of *g* is changed to a harsh palatal.\* We give to *i*, when it stands before a vowel, the same harsh sound.†

The barbarous manner in which the Latin language is pronounced by the English has long been the subject of the animadversion of foreigners, and the regret of their own scholars. It is allowed, on all hands, that this pronunciation of Latin not only carries into that harmonious language many harsh and discordant sounds which are wholly foreign to it, but that it perplexes the student with a vast number of irregularities that have no place in the language itself; and that it is destructive of the beauty of Latin poetry, since it is absolutely incompatible with the just quantity of syllables. These objections to the mode of pronouncing Latin now prevalent in England and this country are obvious to all who will yield an unprejudiced attention to the subject; there are other evils involved in it, which lie deeper, and which, in the view of the philologist, are yet more serious.

This corruption of the pronunciation of Latin, which took place very gradually in England, has, within a recent period, been reduced to a system; and the abuses which at first crept in through negligence, and were continued through the indolence or bigotry of incompetent teachers, in spite of the remonstrances of scholars and men of letters, are in this country actually inculcated in the manuals of instruction. The learner is now informed, upon his first introduction into Latin, that the ancient pronunciation being in a great measure lost, the different nations follow, in their pronunciation of this language, the principles which govern that of their own. This

\* As in *duc-o*, *duc-ere*; which we pronounce *duco*, *dusere*; *leg-o*, *leg-ere*, which we pronounce *lego*, *lejere*.

† As in *iung-o*, *iung-ere*, pronounced by us, *jungo*, *junjere*. It is impossible to imagine a more unpleasant combination of sounds than that heard in these words and the English ones directly derived from them; as *junction*, &c. The older English words from the same root still keep the original sound; as *yoke*, &c. This mode of pronouncing the *i* consonant is likewise a fertile source of perplexity to the young student, who attempts to fathom the mysteries of scanning. He is told, for example, that the *a* of *magis* is short; but that the *a* of *major* (*maior*) is long, in virtue of the consonant which follows it. Yet he is taught to give to the *j* of the one, and the *g* of the other, the same sound. *Major* or *maior* is in fact the regular comparative of *magnus*; (the *n* of *magnus* being casual,) the *g* softened into *i* (as in *royal* from *regalis*) makes a diphthong with the vowel *a*, and it is this which gives its long quantity to the first syllable. The sound which the *i* in Latin had before a vowel is represented in English by *y*. The only word, we believe, in which we still represent this sound by *j*, is *hallelujah*.

is all the information that is afforded him at this period of his studies. No hint is given him that the English pronunciation of Latin differs more from the ancient than that of the other nations of Europe. No means are furnished him of learning what points are doubtful in the ancient pronunciation, and what are ascertained. There is an absolute silence as to the proofs by which the correct sounds of the Roman letters have been established; proofs drawn from the language itself, and from the testimony of ancient grammarians and rhetoricians. All fuller information is reserved for the more advanced student, who, if his curiosity prompt him, may inform himself on these points; but this knowledge comes, if it come at all, only after his vicious pronunciation has become so fixed that he cannot readily disuse it. In the meantime, the pupil is informed, that the absence of any other guide leaves him full liberty to conform his pronunciation to what is termed the "English analogy." He is not, however, abandoned to his own discretion; but, to ensure an absolute uniformity in error, a set of rules, purporting to expound this "English analogy" is placed before the learner. In these he is instructed, to introduce into the Latin, not only those irregularities and anomalies of pronunciation which have undeniably established themselves in our own language, but accidental deviations from correct sounds, and petty vulgarities which we condemn while we allow, and which no child, well trained, even in English pronunciation, would think of carrying into another language. Thus many coarse and unpleasant sounds are conveyed into the Latin which are wholly foreign to it, and which are plainly corruptions in our own language. Of these is the sound given to *s* and *t* before *i* followed by a vowel.\* This harsh sound — so displeasing to a refined ear, that, even in English, every elegant speaker is careful to avoid it, where this can be done without the appearance of affectation, — is strenuously insisted on, and its use amply illustrated by examples. We even go beyond the English in this respect; for whereas they exempt from change the *t* preceded by *s*, our grammarians instruct us to pronounce *Sallustius*, *Salluscheus*; *mixtio*, *mixcheo*, &c. Even these preliminary rules are not

---

\* As in *pen-si-o*, *na-ti-o*, which our youth are directed to pronounce *pencheo*, *nasheo*.

deemed sufficient ; but, since the unwarped mind of a child is continually liable to err into the right, his memory is continually refreshed by foot notes, which instruct him that *ar-ti-um* is *arsheum*, and that the comparative of *mit-is* is not *mit-i-or*, as he might reasonably suppose, but *misheor*.

But, although the English analogy is announced as the guide for the pronunciation of Latin, and is followed, for the most part, with such scrupulous fidelity through its least excusable irregularities, yet we find this analogy occasionally most capriciously deserted. Thus, *ch* is always to have the sound of *k* ; *charta*, *machina*, for example, are to be pronounced *karta*, *makina*. This is certainly not according to the English analogy, for we have both these words in our language (*charter*, *machine*,) and *k* is heard in neither of them. Can it be in compliment to the Greek origin of these words ? We can hardly suppose it ; for why should the sound of *k* be conferred on *ch*, which stands for the Greek *χ*, when it is denied to the *c*, — the representative of the kappa itself, — not only in words derived from the Greek, but even in Greek proper names, as in *Cimon*, (*Κίμων*,) *Alcibiades*, (*Ἀλκιβιάδης*) ? Besides this deliberate departure from the English analogy, we indulge ourselves in sundry odd little freaks of pronunciation, which conform to the analogy of no known tongue ; such, for example, as our pronunciation of *cui* and *huic* ; and these deviations are not only kindly allowed by our grammarians, but actually enjoined. The rules thus laid down for the perversion of the pure sounds of the Latin tongue are commonly given in a chapter on Orthoëpy, which begins with the sarcastic announcement, that “Orthoëpy treats of the right pronunciation of words.”

It would not be uninteresting to compare the rules given in these chapters on Orthoëpy in our modern manuals, with the cautions against falling into vulgar errors of speech, found under the same head in the Latin grammars formerly in use in England. In these the greatest attention to the pronunciation of his pupils was urged upon the teacher.

“Ante omnia deterrendi sunt pueri ab iis vitiis quae nostro vulgo pene propria esse videntur.”

Among the errors especially marked out for avoidance, we find several which are now enjoined as the rule of pronun-



ciation ; as for example, the sound which we give to the *s* between two vowels.\*

“ *S* vero, mediam inter duas vocales corrupte sonant nonnulli, pro *laesus, visus, risus*, pronuntiantes *laezus, vizus, rizus*.”

The omission of the aspirate in the *ch* is likewise condemned.

“ Male pro *Christus, chrisma, Chremes*, efferimus *Cristus, crisma, Cremes*.”

These citations are from Lily's Latin Grammar, first published in the reign of Henry the Eighth, a period when the study of Latin was highly cultivated in England. Great attention was, at that time, paid to the pronunciation of this language. In the elementary works, not only is the pupil warned against palpable errors of the kind above referred to, but slight faults of enunciation are pointed out ; and the pupil is warned against carrying into the Latin that inelegant haste which is the vice of English pronunciation. It is undoubtedly true, that, even then, grave errors had entered into the pronunciation of Latin in England, as well as in France. Philology, as a science, had not then even an existence, and the importance of preserving the sound of root letters was a thing unknown. But the value of pure and harmonious sounds was fully appreciated ; and, in all that regarded the euphony of the Latin language, the scholars of that day were careful guardians of its purity. The most eminent men of that time did not disdain to interest themselves in its preservation. We have proof of this in a letter addressed by Cardinal Wolsey to the masters of his school at Ipswich, in which he exhorts the teachers to use great diligence in forming the speech of their pupils to elegance and correctness. In order that they may be trained to accuracy in this respect, from their first steps in learning, he directs that especial care shall be bestowed on the pupils of the first or youngest class.

“ Quorum os tenerum formare praecipua cura vobis sit, utpote qui et apertissima et elegantissima vocis pronunciatione, tradita elementa proferant.”

But the injury which we offer to the euphony of the Latin language is not the only injustice it suffers at our hands. Our wanton changes in the sounds of the consonants, and

---

\* The Romans pronounced the *s* always hard, as the Spaniards do to this day.

especially of the gutturals, introduce a vast number of irregularities that have no real existence in the language ; separating not merely words sprung from the same root, from each other and from their original, but estranging cases of the same noun and tenses of the same verb ; nay, in the same tense, varying with the person, the root letters of the verb itself ; thus, in fact, changing with the time or the speaker, the nature of the action described. Thus, the perfect of *vinco* is *visi*.\* The effect of this change of sound is sometimes so absurd, that, but for the general habit of laying down all right of private judgment in matters connected with what are called the learned languages, the common sense of even the least observing would take offence at it. For example, in verbs which take the syllabic augment in the perfect, we often make the reduplication consist of a sound totally different from that of the first root letter of the verb. Thus, from *cano*, instead of *cecini* (*kekini*) we have *sesini* ; from *cado*, instead of *cecidī*, (*kekidi*) we have *sesidi*. But perhaps the absurdity of this capricious change in the sound of the guttural is nowhere better shown than in the case of verbs compounded with prepositions, where the final letter of the preposition has assimilated itself to the initial of the verb, as in *accipio*, from *ad* and *capio*. In such cases, when we have substituted the sound of *s* for that of *c*, as the initial of the verb, we neither restore to the preposition its original final letter, nor suffer it to follow the law of attraction, and adapt itself to the change, by assuming a sibilant. On the contrary, we leave the accidental prefix in possession of the root letter of which the verb has been robbed, and, in this way, produce a compound which offends both the ear and the judgment. Thus, of *ad* and *cado*, we make *ac-sido* ; of *sub* and *cedo* (*kedo*), *suc-sedo*.

Again, by this system of varying the sounds of the consonants according to the vowel by which they are followed, a slight variation in the spelling of a word, such as the transposition or elision of a letter, or a change in the vowel, are sufficient to make a wholly new word of it. When we meet *fac* and *dic* in their uncontracted form, we say *fase*, *dise* ; *cetus* and *cretus*, as we pronounce them, will hardly pass for different forms of the same participle. It is manifest how

---

\* Cæsar's laconic despatch, delivered in our pronunciation, would have been very unsatisfactory. It would simply have stated that he came, saw, and *visited*.

greatly all these irregularities and discrepancies must increase the difficulties of the study of Latin, especially to a child, whose natural perception of fitness is not yet perverted. Nor is this inconvenience confined to the study of Latin. The other ancient languages connected with it, whether more or less nearly, are separated from it, and we lose a great part of the benefit which a previous knowledge of the Latin might yield us in their acquisition. Greek, having suffered less than the Latin from these corruptions, is, for us, rather a new language, than another dialect of the same family. Not only are words of the same origin in Greek and Latin made to forget their affinity, but even proper names, as often as they are written in Roman characters are wholly metamorphosed. Nothing can be more ludicrous than, in the construing of Greek, to hear names of persons and places translated by words wholly dissimilar; as, *Κίμων*, *Saimon*; *Κίλικια*, *Sailishya*.\*

Our false pronunciation of the Latin, moreover, separates many Latin words from words of the same root, in our own language. For example, if we change the first root letter of *caedo* to a sibilant, we no longer hear in it our word *cut*, with which it is identical. *Ceva* is of the same elements with our *heifer*, *cow*, and *calx*; but if we pronounce it *seva*, we miss this analogy, as well as its coincidence with *vacca*, of which it is but an inversion. In *cervus*, (a *fork* and a *stag*), when pronounced *servus*, we no longer hear our word *fork*; nor do we feel the force of this word as the name of an animal with furcated horns. The name of *Ceres*, in our pronunciation, ceases to be emblematic; it loses its connection with *creo*† and *grow*, and their derivatives, *corn*, *grain*, and *grass*.

We, indeed, speak inaccurately when we call this alteration of a root letter, a mere change of pronunciation. The pronunciation of words is varied by raising or lowering the vowel tones, or by the interchange of different powers of the same articulation, — as when a Welchman says *coot* for *good*;

---

\* It can hardly be thought that we make amends for the diversity we introduce between the sounds of the two languages, by that forcible assimilation of the accent, by which we rob the Greek of that which, according to Quintilian, constituted its chief superiority over the Latin, as the language of poetry.

† The older form is *cereo*.

but if we make *s* the radical, instead of *c*, we substitute one word for another. When we say that *sensus* means *a valuation* (census,) we say what is not; *servus* is not *a stag* (cervus); *sedo*\* does not mean *I cut* (caedo,) but *I soothe*; when we call *cicer*, *siser*, we call a chick-pea a parsnip.

The change of the sound of the guttural *c* to a sibilant is commonly called, by English grammarians, a *softening* of that sound. But wholly without propriety. *S* is not the soft sound of *c* (*k*).† It is a letter of another class, and of far inferior value. The guttural may be said to be softened, when it passes from its hard sound *c*, to the milder *g*, and from this again to the *j* consonant (English *y*.) If not carried to excess, these changes hardly deserve to be branded with the name of corruptions; since, by this softening process, language, while it resigns something of its rude strength, yet gains in softness and delicacy. It is a change in harmony with man's progress in civilization; an amelioration of manners leading to an increased refinement of speech, and gentler ideas calling for corresponding sounds for their expression. But the further change into the coarse sounds represented in English by the characters *ch* and *j* is a true deterioration. Yet even these corruptions, however unpleasant to a refined ear, follow the regular laws of change, and throw no obscurity over the origin of words. It is otherwise with the change from the sound of *k* to that of *s*. The guttural is the most important and the most deeply significant of articulate sounds. The *s*, on the contrary, is most commonly a servile. It is used in grammatical formations; or, employed as an affix to roots composed of other elements, it acts as a privative or as an intensive. It cannot be a matter of indifference, that we substitute an inferior element for one of the highest dignity. The suppression of an important root letter, or the substitution of a letter of another class, destroys the inherent significance of the word, and reduces that to be a mere arbitrary notation of thought which was its most expressive emblem.

It will perhaps be satisfactory to the general reader, who may not have leisure or inclination to collect the evidence on

---

\* We pronounce *caedo*, *cedo*, and *sedo*, precisely alike.

† The *s* is itself the hard sibilant, whose softer sound is *z*.

this subject for himself, to see a brief summary of the principal proofs by which it has been established, that it was not the practice of the ancients to vary the pronunciation of the *c* and *g*; but that these letters had with them one uniform sound before all the vowels.

One strong proof is the evident correspondence between the Roman *c* and the Greek *κ*. When the Romans wrote Greek words in Latin characters, they used *c* to represent *κ* before the vowels *e* and *i* as well as before the other vowels and the liquids; as Cecrops, *Κέκροψ*; Cibyra, *Κιβύρα*. The Greeks, on their part, evidently supposed their *κ* to have the force of the Roman *c* in all cases; since in writing Latin names they write the syllables *ci*, *ce*, with *κ* and not with *ς*; as *Κικέρων*, *Cicero*; *Σκιπίων*, *Scipio*. Suidas, speaking of the crescent the Roman senators wore on their shoes, calls it, τὸ Ρωμαικὸν κάππα. In like manner the Greek *γ* precisely answered to the Roman *g*. The Romans wrote *Γερόων*, *Geryon*; *γίγας*, *gigas*. The Greeks wrote *Οὐγγίλιος*, *Virgilius*. We have, in the words of St. Augustine, evidence that the Greek *γ* and the Roman *g* were pronounced alike. He says, “Cum dico *lege*, in his duabus syllabis, aliud Græcus, aliud Latinus intelligit; showing that the Latin *lege* and the Greek *λέγε* were the same to the ear.

We find, in contracted words, evidence that *c* and *g* retained invariably their guttural sound; as in the supines of *docere*, *facere*, &c. If these words had been pronounced *dosere*, *fasere*, the supines would have been *dositum*, *fasitum*, which, contracted, would have made *dostum*, *fastum*; not *doc-tum*, *factum*. If the *g* of *lego* had taken the sound of the English *j* before *i* in the perfect tense, the supine must have undergone the same change; and *legitum* must have been pronounced *lejitum*, which plainly could not have been contracted into *lectum*.\*

---

\* The change from *g* to *c*, in the contracted supines of *legere*, *regere*, &c. takes place by a law which forbids a surd to be immediately preceded by a sonant. It is for the same reason that the *b* of *scribo*, &c. becomes *p* before *s* in the *preterite*, and *t* in the supine. This is a law, not of grammar, but of speech, and is observed even where the change of sound is not indicated by the spelling. Quintilian tells us that, though it was customary to write *obtineo* with a *b*, it was yet pronounced as if written with a *p*. In our own language, we more commonly make the second letter conform to the first, sometimes altering the spelling to suit the change of sound, sometimes neglecting this. Thus *slept* is written as well as pronounced with the surd dental; while *decked*, though it retains the spelling which was used

If *cerno* had been pronounced *serno*, the preterite and supine would have been *srevi*, *sretum*, not *crevi*, *cretum*; nor could the participle have been written both *certus* and *cretus*, if, in the one case, it had been pronounced *sertus*, in the other, *cretus*.

Further, *c* and *g* were constantly interchanged by the Romans, as well before *e* and *i* as the other vowels; as, *tricesimus* or *trigesimus* from *triginta*; and again, as *c* was substituted for *g* before *s* or *t*, so, *n* immediately preceding, *g* sometimes took the place of *c*; as in *quadringenti*, for *quadrincenti*, &c. The earlier Romans used *c* in words which were afterwards written with *g*; on the Duillian column, the words *Legiones*, *pugnando*, *magistratos*, are written *Leciones*, *pvcnando*, *macistratos*.

*C* is also sometimes found in the place of *qu* before *e* and *i*; as, *coci* for *coqui*; *collicias* for *colliquias*.

Again, the same word is found variously written as regards its vowels; thus, *decimus* is sometimes written *decumus*. Quintilian tells us, that Cato wrote *dicem* for *dicam*. This diversity could not have existed, if a change in the vowel sound had required a change in a radical consonant. We must suppose that the *c* in *decimus*, *decumus*, and in *decem*, had one uniform sound; and this sound, without question, must have coincided with that of the *K* in *δέκα*.

We have already touched upon some of the other proofs; such as that afforded by the syllabic augment, which frequently took a different vowel from that of the first syllable of the verb; also, that found in the case of prepositions, which, when compounded with verbs, drop their final consonant, and assume the initial of the verb. To these proofs, found in the Latin language itself, we may add the evidence given by the traditionary pronunciation of many words in modern languages, for example, we still find the name of Cæsar\* with its ancient sound in the German, *Kaiser*, an emperor. The *cicer*, from which the cognomen *Cicero* has

---

when this word was pronounced as two syllables, is pronounced as if written *deckt*. On the other hand, *robbed* and *digged*, though contracted in pronunciation, retain the sound of the sonant *d* after the sonants *b* and *g*.

\* This name is, in the Gothic translation of the New Testament, spelt *Kaisar*; as, *Kaisaragild*, *Cæsar-tribute*. Our Anglo Saxon ancestors commonly spelt it *Casere*.

been supposed to be derived, is still *Kicher* in German. We find the Latin *carcer* in German *Kerker*, and in Welch *carcar*, a prison.

The writings of the Latin grammarians contain the most elaborate disquisitions upon the sounds of the letters ; every variation even of the vowel sounds being commented on, and the exact position of the organs in the enunciation of each letter, as exactly as possible, described. The entire silence, then, of these authors with regard to so remarkable an irregularity in the notation of the Latin language, as the use of one character to denote totally distinct sounds, would be, in itself, sufficient proof that no such irregularity existed. We are not, however, left to this negative evidence. The discussion of the question whether the *k* was to be numbered among the letters of the Roman alphabet, gave occasion, on the part of Latin writers, to the most explicit declarations of the perfect identity of the *c* and *k* as regards the sound they represented. Quintilian, in the chapter on Orthography in his *Institutio Oratoria*, condemns the use of the *k* in writing Latin words.

“ Nam K quidem in nullis verbis utendum puto. . . . Hoc eo non omisi quod quidam eam, quoties A sequatur, necessariam credunt ; cum sit C litera, quæ ad omnes vocales vim suam perferat.”

Priscian concurs with Quintilian in regarding the use of the *k* as an unnecessary irregularity, and adds that the *q* would be, in like manner, superfluous, but that it seems to distinguish words in which the *u* was silent, — as in *qui* — from those in which it was pronounced, as in *cui*.\*

“ K enim et Q, quamvis figura et nomine videantur aliquam habere differentiam, cum C tamen eandem, tam in sono vocum quam in metro continent potestatem. Et K quidem penitus supervacua est.” L. I. c. iv.

---

\* We reverse this rule. Our pronunciation of *cui* makes the nominative feminine (*quæ*) the dative. The custom of writing *cui* with a *c*, in order to distinguish it from the nominative, was introduced in the time of Quintilian. He tells us that, in his youth, it was written *quoi*. It is found on inscriptions written *quoiei*, *quoei*, and *quæi*. That the difference between the pronunciation of *qui* and *cui* was anciently correctly observed in England is proved by the directions given by Beda in his treatise on Orthography.

“ Q litera tunc recte ponitur, cum illi statim U litera et alia quælibet pluresve vocales coniunctæ fuerint, ita ut una syllaba fiat, cætera per C scribuntur. *Qui* syllaba per *qu i* scribitur ; si dividitur per *c u i* scribenda est.”

And again : —

. . . . . “quamvis in varia figura, et vario nomine sint K et Q et C, tamen, quia unam vim habent tam in metro quam in sono, pro una litera accipi debent. L. I. c. iv.

“K supervacua est, ut supra diximus; quæ quamvis scribatur, nullam aliam vim habet quam C.” L. I. c. viii.

Most of the other old grammarians concur with Priscian in rejecting the *k*, except in the case of abbreviations. Donatus, Scaurus, and some others, however, defend the use of the *k*, which they contend should be employed before *a*, as the *q* before *u*, the *c* before *e*, *i*, and *o*. But they allege no reason for its use other than the custom of some older writers.\* If there had existed so sufficient a reason, as that which occasioned the introduction of the *k* into the English alphabet, they could not have been silent respecting it.

If the wanton changes we make in the sounds of the consonants rob the Latin tongue of much of its force and energy, our false pronunciation of the vowels is equally detrimental to its euphony, and is absolutely fatal to the measure of ancient verse. Such a confusion, indeed, has it introduced into our ideas upon this latter subject, that few persons have any distinct idea of the difference between accent and quantity; and this is true even of many who, if called upon, could define both terms very accurately. The constant habit of observing the quantity of that syllable only, which gives the rule for the accent, leads naturally to this result. So far is this the case, that it is customary to call the placing of an accent wrongly, giving a “false quantity;” and such a slip is considered to cast a grave imputation on the scholarship of the offender, who would yet have avoided all reproach, if he had placed the accent of the word rightly, though he had violated the quantity of every syllable. English and American scholars attach vast importance to this matter of accent; it is indeed the only thing in which they pique themselves upon a conformity with ancient custom. The ear of an English latinist

---

\* The origin of this custom was a mode of abbreviation common with the Romans, which consisted in denoting a syllable by a single consonant, when the vowel of this syllable was the same with that by which the consonant was pronounced in the alphabet. Thus *b* stood for the syllable *be*; *bne* was read *bene*; *c*, in like manner, stood for the syllable *ce*; but, as the vowel *a* was contained in the name of the *k*, this letter was used to denote the syllable *ca*; thus *cra* would be read *cera*; *kra*, *cara*.



is keenly alive to this horror of a “*false quantity* ;” and this, though it is manifest that no one, pronouncing according to the English custom, can read five lines of Latin poetry without giving as many false quantities as he utters words. Is this an exaggeration ? We believe it will not be found so, when it is considered that it is only in words having the penultimate long, that we are sure of having the quantity of even one syllable correctly given ; and there is still room for one or more errors, according to the number of syllables of which the word is composed. For example, in *divinus* we indeed give the quantity of the second syllable correctly, but we vitiate that of the first, making it short, whereas it should be long ; and, in the dative and ablative plural of this word, we add yet another error in the final syllable ; again giving a short for a long, and thus depriving the word of onethird of its just proportion of sound.

In words of more than two syllables, where the accent falls on the antepenultimate, it is usual with us to shorten the accented syllable, whatever be its real quantity ; as, *frigidus*, which we pronounce *frīgidus*, though the accented vowel is long. We except from this rule, however, words in which the vowel of the penultimate is followed by another vowel. In these, we lengthen the accented antepenultimate, unless the vowel of the accented syllable be *i* ; in this case we shorten it without scruple. Thus, *māneo*, *cāreo*, &c., have their first syllable pronounced long, though it is short ; while in *frīgeo*, *vīnea*, &c., the first syllable is made short, though in reality long. The *i* then, as the accented vowel of an antepenultimate is always short ; the *u*, on the other hand, in the same position, enjoys the privilege of being always long, whatever its just claims in this respect ; as in *dūbito*, *fūgito*, &c. But, with regard to words of this class, let Mr. Walker speak.\* We will only premise that the passage quoted was not written, as might be supposed, to warn the student against the errors of the English pronunciation of Latin, but, on the contrary, to instruct him how he may more accurately con-

---

\* We refer to Mr. Walker, in this connection, because we observe that his rules for Greek and Latin proper names have been made the basis of the system of pronunciation inculcated in the grammars used in our principal schools. Mr. Walker is, moreover, we believe, the highest authority for the mispronunciation of words, whether Greek, Latin, or English.

form himself to them. These directions are particularly designed, as the preface informs us, for the benefit of self-teaching students, whose undirected reason might otherwise, perhaps, have led them to seek the rules of Latin pronunciation in the language itself; or, in the works of ancient grammarians, and who, in the simplicity of ignorance, might even have supposed that quantity had something to do in Latin verse.

“ Every accented antepenultimate but *u*, even when followed by one consonant only, is, in our pronunciation of Latin, as well as of English, short; thus *fabula*, *separo*, *diligo*, *nobilis*, *cucumis*, have the first syllables pronounced as in the English words *capital*, *celebrate*, *simony*, *solitude*, *luculent*, in direct opposition to the Latin quantity, which makes every antepenultimate vowel in all these words but the last, long; and this we pronounce long, though short in Latin. But if a semi-consonant diphthong succeed, then every such vowel is sounded long but *i* in our pronunciation of both languages; and *Euganeus*, *Eugenia*, *filius*, *folium*, *dubia*, have the vowel in the antepenultimate syllable pronounced exactly as in the English words *satiate*, *menial*, *delirious*, *notorious*, *penurious*; though they are all short in Latin but the *i*, which we pronounce short, though in the Latin it is long.

In words of two syllables it is our custom to make the first syllable long, without regard to its actual quantity. The *a* of *vādor*, *I give bail*, and of *vādo*, *I march*; the *e* of *lēgo*, *I read*, and of *lēgo*, *I depute*; the *i* of *dīco*, *I dedicate*, and of *dīco*, *I say*; the *o* of *Nōtus*, *the South wind*, and of *nōtus*, *known*, receive all the same quantity. The masculine and neuter of *idem* are long alike; *dūcis*, the genitive of the noun, and *dūcis*, the second person of the verb; *sēdes*, *thou sittest*, and *sēdes*, *a seat*, know no distinction.

Our method of pronunciation very seldom allows us to give the just quantity to final syllables and monosyllables. These last are commonly pronounced short. *Ōs*, *the mouth*, and *ōs*, *a bone*, are not distinguished from each other in the nominative; *nihil* becomes *nīl*, whenever, the sign of the aspirate being omitted, it is written *nīl* (*nīil*); although we pronounce the uncontracted form, not only distinctly as two syllables, but change the short vowel of the first syllable to a diphthong (*naihil*); thus depriving this word, at one time, of one half its just measure of vowel sound, and giving it one half more than its due at another. The termination *es*, how-

ever, whether as a monosyllable or a final syllable, enjoys the privilege of being always long ; thus *ēs* from *esse*, has the same quantity with *ēs* from *edere* ; the last syllable of *mīlēs* is as long as that of *quīēs*.

The capricious manner in which the sounds of the vowels are varied in our pronunciation of Latin leads to countless irregularities that have no real existence. The vowel of the nominative case of the noun is sometimes shortened, sometimes lengthened, and not unfrequently changed for a wholly different sound in the other cases. Thus the *o* which we shorten in the nominative of *ōs*, becomes long in *ōris* ; the *i* of *mīles*, which is expanded into the sound of the diphthong *ai*, in the nominative, is forced to contract itself to that of short *i* in the genitive *militis*. The verbs also have frequently one vowel sound in the present, and quite another in the imperfect ; and, again, recover the first in the perfect ; the sound continually shifting, and the quantity expanding or contracting, as the number of syllables is increased or diminished. But, though we thus vary the sounds of the vowels without scruple, where there is no authority for it, yet when these changes actually take place, distinguishing contracted from uncontracted forms, or denoting difference of tense, we either neglect them altogether, or apply them according to the rule of contraries. Thus we make no distinction between the *e* of *pēs* and that of *pēdis*, but pronounce both long alike ; we shorten the *o* of *bōs*, which, as the vowel of a word originally a dissyllable, is long, and yet lengthen the short *o* of the genitive *bōvis*. We do not observe the distinction between the short *e* of the present and the long *e* of the perfect of *venire* ; yet, in the tenses formed from the perfect, we indeed change the quantity, and, as we have made the *short* first syllable of the present *long*, so we make the *long* first syllable of the pluperfect *short*.

If there yet remain any doubt in the mind of the reader, as to the incompatibility of the English mode of pronouncing the vowels with the just quantity of Latin words, let him compare the rules laid down for the sounds of the letters, in the grammar of Andrews and Stoddard, now used in the principal schools in New England, with those given in the same volume for the quantity of syllables. The first direction which is given for the sounds of the vowels is the following : —

“An accented vowel, at the end of a syllable, has always its *long* English sound.”

The italics are not ours. It was probably deemed the more essential to impress this rule on the mind of the youthful aspirant for knowledge, inasmuch as, of the six examples given under this rule, of words in which the vowel of the accented syllable is to be pronounced *long*, four, namely, *pāter*, *dēdit*, *tūba*, *Tŷrus*, have the accented vowel *short*; and the bewildered pupil will hereafter find, under the rules for the quantity of first and middle syllables, *dedi* specified as one of seven perfects that have the first syllable *short*. Again,

“*I* is long in the first syllable of a word the second of which is accented, when it stands alone before a consonant, or ends a syllable before a vowel.”

The example which illustrates the first part of this rule is *īdoneus*, in which the initial *i* is *short*. With the second part — *i* is long when it ends a syllable before a vowel — let the reader compare the first general rule of quantity, “A vowel before another vowel is short.” Again,

“When a syllable ends with a consonant, it has always the short English sound.”

Well may the student who, reading this comprehensive rule, has begun to flatter himself that the difficulties of Latin quantity have been exaggerated, start confounded, when, turning over his grammar, he meets with two pages of rules in large print, and exceptions in fine, all devoted to this very subject of the quantity of syllables ending in consonants. Still more will his perplexity increase, when the fourth general rule of quantity meets his eye. This instructs him, that “*a vowel naturally short, before two consonants is long* ;” but, turning to the examples which illustrate the rule of pronunciation, that “*a syllable ending with a consonant has its vowel short*,” he finds that, in five of these, namely, in *regnum*, *magnus*, *finis*, *fustis*, *cygnus*, the vowel to be pronounced short is precisely in the position, which by the rule of prosody should entitle it to be long. It is but just to state, however, that this rule of pronunciation allows of some exceptions; and the second and third of these chance to agree with the rule on page 278, that *es* and *os*, as *final syllables are long*. This coincidence, indeed, is but partial; for the rule of pro-

nunciation declares *os* to be long only in plural cases, while the rule of quantity admits, in Latin words, of but three exceptions. On the other hand, the direction to make *es* final long, which, when a rule of quantity, has many exceptions, as a rule of pronunciation has none. But let not the student complain of this slight discrepancy, nor let him ask why that which is the rule on one page of his grammar is reduced to be an exception to an opposite rule on another; let him rather be grateful, that he is allowed to find even this perverse and imperfect conformity between the pronunciation of Latin words and their quantity.

A single word enjoys, under the rules for pronunciation, the dignity of an exception to itself. The word *post*, — in virtue of there being in English a word *post*, in which the *o* is pronounced long\* — is entitled to have its vowel long. But this privilege is not extended to the words derived from it; and here the student may again compare what is said of the pronunciation of *postremus*, on p. 4, with the rule of quantity on p. 262, which declares that “derivative words retain the quantity of their primitives.”

The labors of the Latin Grammar at length accomplished, the laws of quantity known by theory, and those of pronunciation familiarized by use, the student, perhaps, attempts to put in practice these contradictory rules, and, by their aid, to fathom the mysteries of ancient song. Now is it that, with Mr. Melmoth,† he is lost in wonder at the “exquisite sensibility of the ancient ear,” that could find distinctions in the length of syllables in which the duller modern organ can detect no inequality. He has heard, perhaps, that it has been said by some one of elder time, that if, in the first line of Virgil, *primus* had been *primis*, the harmony of the line would be destroyed.‡ He may read the line again and again, but rests in the conviction that, to his ear, the harmony is in no way affected by the change. He feels, indeed, a secret misgiving that all the words in the *Æneid* might be varied

---

\* Yet the pronunciation of the word *post* is in English rather the exception than the rule; most words spelt in this way change the sound of *o* to a sound lying between *a* and *o*, but nearer to the first; as, *lost*, *frost*, &c.

† Author of *Fitzosborne's Letters*.

‡ The last syllable of *primus* being short, and that of *primis* long, in Roman mouths; — in the English pronunciation of Latin, both are short alike.

indefinitely as to their sound, without its making any particular difference to him. If he be an ingenuous youth, he contents himself with lamenting the obtuseness of his own faculties, and resigns the hope of ever discovering the charm of Latin verse. If he be a bit of a quack, or if his imagination be capable of uncommon flights, he puts a good face on the matter, talks of the melody of Latin poetry, for the benefit of the less imaginative or the more frank, to the end of his Latin-reading days, which most commonly, except with men professedly literary, extend no farther than the term of the academic course.

Even in the scanning of verses, according to the English and American mode of practising it, the just quantity of the syllables is wholly neglected. Nothing more is done than to divide the line into the proper number of feet, and the feet into the due number of syllables, these being arbitrarily called long or short, as the case may require; though the ear can discover no such distinction, or, more often, perceives the short to be long, and the long to be short. For an example, we need go no further than the two first feet of the first line of Virgil:—

Armă vī | rumquē cǎ |

The last syllable of both these dactyls is, by English and American scholars, pronounced long; in the first, the short *i* of *virum* is changed to a diphthong; in the second, the short *a* of *cano* receives the long sound of *e*. But to understand fully what fate the labored lines of Virgil must find in an American mouth, we have but to read the concluding observations on the pronunciation of penultimate and final syllables in the received Latin Grammar.

“To pronounce Latin words correctly, it is necessary to ascertain the quantities of their two last syllables only; and the rules for the quantities of final syllables would be unnecessary, but for the occasional addition of enclitics. As these are generally monosyllables, and, for the purpose of accentuation, are considered as parts of the words to which they are annexed, they cause the final syllable of the original word to become the penult of the compound. It is necessary, therefore, to learn the quantities of those final syllables *only* which end in a *vowel*.”

Nothing more is necessary, then, in order to pronounce Latin, than to know the quantity of the penultimate syllable.

Nothing more is necessary in order to read correctly the elaborated works of those poets whom,\* as Cicero tells us, the laws of measure so strictly bound, that no syllable in their verse might be, even by a breath, longer or shorter than was fitting. Well might Mitford assert, that English scholars “seem resolved to confine the doctrine of quantity as something mysterious or cabalistical, to be locked up in the mind, and forbidden in practice.”

Yet the whole subject of quantity is extremely simple, and may be easily comprehended by any boy of ten years old. The truth is, all these rules upon rules, and exceptions upon exceptions, would be superfluous, if children were taught from the beginning to pronounce Latin properly; they would, in that case, never err in the quantity or accent of a word, any more than the Romans themselves did. Most of the general rules of quantity would, if the language were correctly pronounced, be deduced from it by the pupil himself. For example, the rule which declares a diphthong to be long. If the learner had been accustomed to sound the two vowels of the diphthong, he would no more need to be told that a diphthong is longer than a simple vowel, than that two syllables are longer than one. But if, instead of pronouncing the diphthong as a double sound, he has been used to give to the broad, full sounds *ae* and *oe*, the sound of *i*, the slenderest of all the vowels, there is no diphthong there, and the rule, which at first seemed superfluous as a truism, now becomes doubly superfluous from the want of any thing to which to apply it. But in truth, we understand by a diphthong not two vowel sounds in one syllable, but two vowel characters written one into the other. So absolutely is this the case, and so coolly taken for granted to be so, that Walker talks, in all seriousness, of “ocular diphthongs,” and diphthongs to the eye.” It must have been in prophetic vision of the fate his cherished language was hereafter to meet, that Cicero wrote, — “Omnium longitudinum et brevitatum in sonis, sicut acutarum graviumque vocum judicium, natura in auribus nostris collocavit;” a truth which otherwise it had seemed the world hardly needed a Cicero to tell it.

---

\* Quos necessitas cogit, et ipsi numeri et modi, sic verba versu includere, ut nihil sit, ne spiritu quidem minimo, brevius aut longius quam necesse est. *De Orat.* L. III. c. xlviii.

Syllables were not arbitrarily called long or short by the ancients. This distinction was founded on fact. Nor was it a nice distinction, perceptible only by a delicate ear; \* the difference between a long vowel and a short one was as the difference between two and one. It is well known that the Romans anciently wrote the long vowels with two vowel characters, as *amaabaamus*, *musaa* (abl.) The genitive of *Pompeius* was written *Pompeiii*. The temporal augments were originally written in full, as *eedi*, *eemi*, &c. This custom continued, according to Quintilian, until the time of Accius, and even somewhat later. Subsequently, for greater expedition in writing, one of the vowels was omitted, and the apex was placed over the remaining vowel, to mark the omission.† These contractions were made merely for the convenience of the scribe; the syllable lost nothing of its just quantity of sound in consequence.

In order to read Latin, and especially Latin poetry, with propriety, it is necessary that each syllable of each word should receive its just measure of sound. Children should be taught to pronounce accurately, in this respect, from their first entrance into the study of Latin. To facilitate this, it is desirable that, at least in all the books intended for the instruction of youth, every long vowel should be marked as such. All these minute rules for finding the quantity of syllables would be extremely useful to an editor in this view, but it is surely superfluous for each individual to learn by rote a set of tedious rules, of which he is never to make any application, when, by a little pains in his early instruction, all that these are designed to teach might be familiarly known to him by practice. Thus trained, the student would afterwards read Latin poetry, as the Romans themselves read it, without the aid of rules; and, if the composition of verses in a foreign and dead language be deemed a thing desirable,

\* Longam (syllabam) esse duorum temporum, brevem unius, etiam pueri sciunt. Quint. *Inst. Orat.* L. ix.

† In the case of the *i* this mark of abbreviation was not used; the long or double *i* was denoted by a lengthened character; as in this line from an inscription of the time of Tiberius:

NĪL PRO'SVNT LACRIMAE NEC POSSVNT FATA MOVERĪ.

The omission of a vowel character was also sometimes noted by a slight space and a mark like that of the acute accent; as in *prosum* in the above line; but this was not common.



even for this, he would have a guide within himself more unerring than any written laws. It is to be remembered, that the poets did not compose their verses by these rules of prosody, but in conformity with their own poetic sense. — Ante enim carmen ortum est, quam observatio carminis. — The rules were deduced from the writings of Greek and Roman poets; and were thus carefully elaborated at a later time, when the pronunciation having been corrupted, the ear alone could no longer judge of the harmony of ancient verse. Those, therefore, who were ambitious of writing after classic models, studied exactly the compositions of the ancient masters. The labors of the expositors of ancient prosody are most valuable, since, by their help, the student may read the Greek and Roman poets; but they are of use only so far as they are put in practice; enclosed within the covers of a book, or stowed away, with other scholastic lumber, in some unfurnished corner of the brain, they are absolutely valueless.

Some difficulty may, perhaps, be at first experienced in restoring the just quantity of the syllables in Latin, arising from the fact that we are not, in our own language, accustomed to give the vowel sounds with any fulness or distinctness, except in syllables where the accent falling on a vowel compels us to make some slight rest upon it. Even in this case, we make the delay as short as possible; while, to an unaccented vowel, we allow barely that amount of sound which is necessary to give voice to the consonant which precedes it. The ancients gave to the long vowels their full measure of sound, even in their common discourse; and so sensitive was the Roman ear to these distinctions of quantity, and so little license was permitted to the poets in this respect, that Cicero, speaking of the just, intuitive sense of harmony and number possessed even by those who were wholly ignorant of the rules of versification, says that if, on the stage, the smallest offence was offered to the laws of measure, so that even a single syllable was made either shorter, or longer, than was just, the whole theatre clamored against it.\* The moderns, not less than the ancients, are endowed with this discriminating sense; but to enable them to exercise it upon Greek and Latin poetry, it is necessary that the just quantity

---

\* De Orat. L. III. c. l.

of syllables should be exactly observed. The first step towards this must be the restoration of the correct sounds of the vowels.

It is a little remarkable, that while we alter the sounds of the Latin vowels to accommodate them to the supposed rule of pronunciation in our own language, we have a number of Latin words in common use among us that still retain, by tradition, their original sound. Thus we pronounce the word *dōs* always short in Latin, though we have in English *dose*, the same word with the same meaning; namely, *something given*. We give to the short *i* of *bībo* the sound of the diphthong *ai*,\* though we have the word *bibber*, which might have been a guide to the Latin word from which it is derived. The *a* of *draco* takes, in our pronunciation, the sound of the long *e*; yet our English *dragon* has preserved the sound and the short quantity of this vowel, and that without the hint of a double consonant. A child's first book is still called his *primer*, though, to agree with the pretended rule of English pronunciation by which the *i* of *primus* is changed to a diphthong, it ought to be called his *praimer*. The *i* of *vinum*, and also of our *wine* and *vine*, is made to suffer this change; but the sound which this vowel originally had, both in the Latin and the English words, is still heard in the compounds *vinegar* and *vineyard*.

It is not now easy to ascertain at precisely what period this corruption of the vowel sounds entered into the English pronunciation of Latin. The change probably took place, as in the English language itself, very gradually. It did not, however, escape the censure of English scholars. Many attempts were made, at various periods, first to arrest the progress of these corruptions, and afterwards to reform them. We find, scattered through the writings of men of letters of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, complaints of the deterioration of the pronunciation of Latin, and the inconveniences resulting from it; this language no longer serving as a medium of oral communication between English scholars and those of the continent of Europe. From among those who have censured the barbarous pronunciation of Latin among their countrymen, and have desired to reform it, we

---

\* See first note on p. 439.

cannot select a higher authority than that of Milton. In the letter addressed by him to Mr. Hartlib on the subject of education, among the first rules which he lays down for the exercises of the pupils in his model school, is the following in regard to their instruction in Latin :

“ Their speech is to be fashioned to a distinct and clear pronunciation, as near as possible to the Italian, especially in vowels. For we Englishmen, being far northerly, do not open our mouths in the cold air wide enough to grace a Southern tongue, but are observed by all other nations to speak exceeding close and inward ; so that *to smatter Latin with an English tongue is as ill a hearing as Law-French.*”

Ainsworth does not neglect to call attention to this subject.\*

“ With much reluctance, I remark that foreigners hold us little better than barbarians in many parts of pronunciation.”

He particularly reprehends the neglect of the quantity of the vowels, and the “ depraved sound ” of the *c* and *g* before *ae*, *oe*, *e*, *i*, and *y*.

“ The irregular and uncertain pronunciation of these letters proves often a great discouragement to those who desire to learn our tongue ; and this, together with our different sound of the vowels, makes our Latin almost as unintelligible as our English.

. . . . This I leave to the consideration and redress of the learned schoolmasters of this kingdom, as well deserving it.”

Philipps,† in his “ Method of teaching Languages,” published 1750, speaks of the very faulty and unpleasant manner in which Englishmen pronounce Latin. He describes his mode of teaching this language to a youth placed under his care, and tells us that he took “ special care ” to wean him from his awkward manner of pronouncing.

“ He gave me a great deal of trouble for some months on this head ; so that I had much ado to persuade him to open his mouth ; for he pronounced the vowels very badly, especially the *a* and *e* ; for instead of *amo*, he pronounced *emo* ; and when he pronounced *emo*, *to buy*, he called it *imo* ; and instead of *imo*, *yes*, he said *aimo*.”

---

\* In the later school editions of his dictionary, the remarks on pronunciation have been omitted.

† Philipps was preceptor to some of the princes of the royal family. He was a man of excellent classical attainments, and possessed, what was even then rare among the scholars of England, a familiar acquaintance with many modern tongues.

Philipps speaks of this inelegant mode of pronouncing Latin as of a thing common, indeed, yet not, even in his time, universal. For he says, "Many gentlemen in England still speak Latin like men; *ore rotundo*." \*

The learned and able Dr. Foster, in his Essay on Accent and Quantity, animadverts upon the violence done to the quantity of the ancient languages by the English mode of pronunciation. After commenting on the attachment to quantity professed by modern scholars, he says : —

"And yet this very quantity they do all (most of them without knowing it,) most grossly corrupt. This assertion, I am aware, is very repugnant to the prejudices of many persons, who have long flattered themselves with an opinion, that, in their pronunciation of Greek and Latin, they strictly adhere to the right quantity, and will therefore startle at the very mention of their violation of it. Yet this, I am persuaded, will appear to an attentive English reader, who shall make trial of a few lines, either in verse or prose, in any ancient author with this view. He will find, I believe, that he pronounceth as *long* every short penultimate of all dissyllables, and every *short* antepenultima of all polysyllables that have their penultima short too."

Mitford, in his "Inquiry into the Principles of Harmony in Language," published towards the close of the last century, points out the absurdity of introducing into the Latin the eccentric pronunciation of the English, represents its incompatibility with the true quantity of syllables, and proposes the restoration of the ancient sounds of the vowels as still heard in the Italian. These attempts at reform, however, had to encounter the opposition offered by the prejudices or vanity of those, who, educated under the old system, were unwilling to find themselves left behind by the progress of improvement. They were likewise distasteful to many persons engaged in the teaching of Latin, who found both their interest and their reputation for learning involved in the proposed change. Another obstacle was found in the very narrow attainments of English scholars, "many, or perhaps most, of the most learned of them," as Mitford writes, "being little acquainted with any living language but their own, and

---

\* The correct pronunciation of the Latin vowels was taught in Winchester College until the middle of the last century.

wholly unpractised in any other pronunciation." This obstacle to reform probably no longer exists in England, and certainly cannot now impede it in our country. Our scholars are familiar with the languages and literature of continental Europe, and there are, indeed, few persons among us, who acquire a knowledge of the Latin, that do not add to it, at least, that of the French and Italian.

We quote Dr. Kraitsir's views of the importance of the restoration of the pronunciation of Latin.

"It may still be well to answer the question, which indolence and a want of taste for truth so often put. Of what importance is this subject? If it is not enough to answer, that, in a universe which is a universe because it turns round one centre, the truth must be useful, because it is truth; we can but refer our reader to all we have said of the science of philology, and all we have implied. The philosopher whose single aim is truth, and who devoutly believes that there is no fact which does not cover an infinite depth, no truth without infinite living consequences, will need nothing more. On the other hand, the man of the world and the tender mother will be satisfied to know, that the true pronunciation of languages brings out their intrinsic affinities, their approximation as they approach their origin in time, and their identification, at the centre of mind; so that many languages can be learnt, when treated in this way, at once more rapidly and more thoroughly, than any one language can be acquired isolated, and consequently cut off from the principles of universal language.

"But a sufficient reason for recovering the true pronunciation of Latin is *its beauty*. To put the vowel sounds in such harlequin costume, as they are found in the English language, is a crime against Roman taste, which should terrify us with the expected ghosts of a nation, so devoted to order and symmetry."

The difficulty of making this change is not so great as might be thought, even to those who have for years accustomed themselves to a false pronunciation. The reading Latin aloud, correctly, an hour or two a day, for a few weeks, will be quite sufficient to banish the old method from our regard. The true sounds are so harmonious in themselves, and so consistent with the genius and structure of the language, that they recommend themselves at once, both to the ear and the judgment. As they become familiar, we feel, for the first time, the dignity of Roman eloquence, the

melody of ancient verse. It is as if a shrivelled mummy had suddenly started into life and vigor, and re-indued itself with the bloom and charm of youth.

We have dwelt thus at length upon this topic, because we wish to make the matter clearly understood by that large class of persons in this country, of intelligent and cultivated minds, who, yet, not having passed through the regular course of scholastic studies, are obliged, in the education of their children, to take things very much upon trust. If it be desirable that such a number of years, and these taken from that period of life most valuable for the acquisition of knowledge, should be devoted to the study of the ancient languages, it is surely desirable that, in compensation of all this toil, at least a knowledge of these languages should be acquired.

There is no branch of education which stands in greater need of the quickening touch of reform, than the study of the ancient languages. It is freely allowed, both in this country and in England, that notwithstanding the disproportionate amount of time bestowed on the study of Latin, very few Latin scholars are formed. Yet the language itself certainly presents no greater difficulties now, than when it was readily spoken and written by all educated persons; nor is there any good reason why it should be a harder task to us, than to the Germans of the present time. The unsatisfactory result of our efforts is then to be attributed to the erroneous system of instruction. Nothing, it must be allowed, can be more wearisome or pedantic than this system; nothing could be better adapted to disgust the learner with the study, before he reaches an age at which he could judge of its importance. Children of tender years are required to oppress their memories with grammatical rules and disquisitions, which would tax severely a mature intellect. These are so obscurely, often so inaccurately worded, that they are intelligible only when read by the light of a previous knowledge of the facts they pretend to expound. Many of these rules, when disrobed of their cumbrous phraseology, appear mere truisms; they are, in many cases, so trivial, so often resting on no other foundation than the whim of some ancient pedant, that they make us realize fully the good sense of Quintilian's assertion,

that it is one of the first requisites of a grammarian, to know that there are things which are not worth the knowing.

There is no reason, except the unnatural manner in which they are taught, that the ancient languages should be so much more difficult of acquirement than the modern. On the contrary, as they are more regular, more complete in their grammatical forms, and no longer subject to the empire of caprice, a knowledge of them may be acquired with greater ease and certainty. These languages are not dead; or, if dead, yet so choicely embalmed, that they miss of life only the power of growth and the chances of decay.

Reform in matters connected with teaching, and especially the teaching of the ancient languages, has been impeded in this country by the superstitious deference we pay to the practice of the English universities, to which we are accustomed to look as to the well-heads of learning. In this connection, we may quote the words of Dr. Foster, himself a son of one of these time-honored institutions, and one of those whose scholarship has reflected honor on their Alma Mater. He speaks thus of the *Academiæ auctoritas*.

“Although the name of a university be weighty and venerable, yet, when we consider it as consisting of fallible individuals, it greatly abates of that awe its name might otherwise inspire.”

We make no quarrel with a respect for things old and established; nor would we willingly see lessened that love and reverence with which our transplanted England turns to her elder home. But the European England of the nineteenth century has no more claim to this title of “the Old,” than ours of the Western world. The relation in which these countries stand to one another is not that of parent and child, but that of brother to brother. It is for each to give and take mutual example of zeal for the cause of truth and progress; it is for neither to form itself slavishly by the other. Let, rather, both turn to that venerable England, whose children we, as they, truly are, and among whose sons we may find men on whose pattern it might, indeed, not misbecome us to model ourselves; men who looked to right, and not to custom; who sought for truth, and did not ask after authority.